

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6188

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF 415TH PRC MEETING, DECEMBER 24, 1975

1. REORGANIZATION OF SOUTHCOM. THE CINC SAID THAT A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE IN WASHINGTON DECEMBER 26 CONCERNING THE REORGANIZATION OF SOUTHCOM. AFSSO AND NAVSO WOULD BE TECHNICALLY DISESTABLISHED AS OF THE END OF DECEMBER 1975.

2. UNILATERAL ACTIONS. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD SENT A CABLE DECEMBER 23 WITH RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FORMATION OF A JOINT COMMISSION TO WORK OUT WAYS OF PERMITTING PANAMANIAN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE CANAL ZONE. THE MESSAGE WAS CLEARED BY PANCANAL AND SOUTHCOM. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY VEYSEY WILL CONSULT WITH CONGRESS CONCERNING: (1) THE PIPELINE; (2) BALBOA DRY DOCK; (3) NEW FRANCE FIELD; AND (4) PORT SAN LORENZO. AMBASSADOR NOTED THERE WAS SOME INCONGRUITY BETWEEN PANAMANIAN INTEREST IN THESE ACTIONS AND FOREIGN MINISTRY'S REFUSAL TO PERMIT GRAVA, S.A'S REQUEST TO CARRY OUT GRAVEL AND SAND OPERATIONS IN THE CANAL ZONE.

3. INFORMATION COORDINATING SUBCOMMITTEE. THE AMBASSADOR REFERRED TO PRESS RELEASES EMANATING FROM THE CANAL ZONE AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES WHICH HAVE CREATED ADVERSE RE-
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ACTIONS IN PANAMA AND POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE CHARTER

OF THE PRC'S INFORMATION COMMITTEE ITS MEMBERS SHOULD ROUTINELY COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES. HE FELT THAT SUCH COORDINATION HAD NOT WORKED TOO WELL RECENTLY. THERE WAS A NEED FOR MORE SENSITIVITY CONCERNING NEWS RELEASES WHICH COULD AROUSE PANAMANIAN REACTIONS AND DAMAGE THE INTERESTS OF THE CANAL ZONE OR MILITARY AUTHORITIES. THE INFORMATION SUB-COMMITTEE'S CHARTER SHOULD BE AMENDED TO INDICATE THAT INFORMATION FOR RELEASE IN PANAMA SHOULD BE CLEARED WITH THE EMBASSY'S INFORMATION OFFICER BEFORE RELEASE. THE GOVERNOR INDICATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL WITH HIS INFORMATION OFFICIALS AND THAT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT IT SMACKED OF CENSORSHIP. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT NO CENSORSHIP WAS INTENDED AND THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO WORK OUT EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING INFORMATION RELEASES SO THAT USG AGENCIES WOULD BE PROTECTED. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE PRC PRINCIPALS WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE INFORMATION OFFICERS WHO IN TURN WOULD REVIEW THE INFORMATION SUB-COMMITTEE'S PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES. THEY WOULD CONSIDER THE NEEDED CLEARANCES WITH THE EMBASSY AND PERHAPS ESTABLISH THAT CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF RELEASES WOULD BE CLEARED WITH THE EMBASSY AND OTHERS WOULD BE CLEARED WITHIN THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

4. CLUB NAUTICO IN COLON. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT THE USE OF PART OF THE OLD FRANCE FIELD AREA AS THE SITE OF THE CLUB NAUTICO WAS CONTRARY TO THE AGREEMENT CONCERNING OLD FRANCE FIELD. HE HAD, AS DIRECTED BY HIS SUPERIORS, SENT LETTERS TO GABRIEL LEWIS AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE FREE ZONE INFORMING THEM OF THIS.

5. CHORRERA-TOCUMEN HIGHWAY. THE REPORT OF A STUDY GROUP CONCERNING THE CHORRERA-ARRAIJAN-CANAL ZONE-TOCUMEN ROAD HAS BEEN COMPLETED. THERE IS NO OBJECTION TO THE ROUTE, BUT THERE IS ALSO NO POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FUNDING. THE GOVERNOR SUGGESTED THAT POSSIBLY THE CANAL ZONE PORTION OF THE HIGHWAY SHOULD BE FINANCED OUT OF THE INTERAMERICAN HIGHWAY FUNDS.

6. PANAMANIAN-CANAL ZONE RELATIONSHIPS. THE GOVERNOR
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NOTED THERE HAD BEEN SOME EROSION OF THE QUALITY OF CANAL ZONE-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS IN RECENT WEEKS. ONE EXAMPLE WAS THAT PANAMANIAN CUSTOMS AT TOCUMEN WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY RIGID IN RELATIONS WITH CANAL ZONE IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AT THE AIRPORT. ALSO PANAMANIAN HAD REQUESTED TO TAKE OVER POLICING ON 4TH OF JULY AVENUE, THE BRIDGE OF THE AMERICAS AND THE I-A HIGHWAY TO ARRAIJAN DURING THE HOLIDAYS AND THROUGH JANUARY 9.

THE CINC SAID THAT A SIMILAR, BUT MORE LIMITED, REQUEST HAD BEEN RELAYED TO HIM BY COLONEL NORIEGA THROUGH SOUTHCOM J-2 ON DECEMBER 23. THE REQUEST CONCERNED ONLY MINOR TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS INVOLVING PANAMANIAN ONLY. ALL OTHER MATTERS, INCLUDING TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS, WOULD BE HANDLED BY U.S. AUTHORITIES. TORRIJOS REPORTEDLY HAD BECOME CONCERNED OVER TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT ARRESTS OF PANAMANIAN BY ZONE POLICE FOR MINOR TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS COULD LEAD TO A SERIOUS INCIDENT. TORRIJOS HOPED HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION COULD BE GIVEN TO THE REQUEST PRIOR TO THE HOLIDAYS. THE CINC FELT THAT THIS WOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE PANAMANIAN AS A TEST OF U.S. ABILITY TO COOPERATE. HE FELT THAT THE MEASURE COULD BE DEFENDED NOT AS A GIVEAWAY OF SOVEREIGNTY BUT AS AN EXPEDIENCY THAT WOULD INCREASE U.S. SECURITY PRIOR TO AND DURING JANUARY 9. THE AMBASSADOR CONCURRED AND COMMENTED THIS IS THE SORT OF THING THAT THE U.S. MIGHT WELL HAVE SUGGESTED. GOVERNOR PARFITT SAID HE SAW THE MERIT IN THE PROPOSAL BUT THOUGHT IT WAS ILLEGAL AND WAS AFRAID OF THE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION IF HE WERE TO AGREE TO IT. AFTER DISCUSSION IT WAS AGREED THAT THE GOVERNOR WOULD INFORM WASHINGTON OF THE PROPOSAL AND OF HIS PREFERENCE NOT TO ACCEDE TO THE PANAMANIAN REQUEST. HIS MESSAGE, HOWEVER, WOULD INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF THE AMBASSADOR AND THE CINC.

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